



Success Through Human Resources: From Strategy to Action

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“Our stewardship responsibilities here at the Interior Department touch the lives of American people in many ways. We preserve the places that give us a proud sense of our history -- from Independence Hall to Gettysburg. We protect breathtaking landscapes of special natural beauty, from the depths of the Grand Canyon to the peaks of Mount Rainier. We provide for the environmentally sound production of oil, gas, and other mineral resources found on America’s public lands. We honor this nation’s obligations to Native Americans and Alaska Natives. We protect critical habitats for the nation’s fish and wildlife. We manage water resources for millions of people in the Western states. We provide useful, scientific and technical information for sound decision making.

Our key resources in these efforts are our people-- employees of the Interior Department. Without you, our dedicated, skilled and

committed public servants, we could never accomplish the missions entrusted to us by the American people.

We are a proud Department with a clearly defined mission, numerous success stories and a gracious rich history. The plan ***Success Through Human Resources: From Strategy to Action***, paints a clear picture of the value and importance we place in our employees. As we move the country into the twenty-first century, the visions and goals outlined in this plan will help chart the direction for delivering the best human resources through diversity and a better understanding of how to successfully accomplish our mission through a quality work force.

Keep up the good work."

- Bruce Babbitt
Secretary

"Since becoming the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget it is no coincidence that my top three priorities have been **accountability, diversity, and quality of life** – all *people* issues. People are what make this department move and make it great. Without knowledgeable, skilled, trained, and motivated workers, the U.S. Department of the Interior can never hope to accomplish its natural and cultural resource preservation missions.

Success Through Human Resources: From Strategy to Action creates just the right focus on service and management in this department. It communicates the kind of employee and mission "centric" activities that will move us forward, as a department, into the decade ahead. People have, and will continue to be, my highest priority and this plan sets forth the strategic principles we need to create, enhance, and capitalize upon the strengths of our people."

- John Berry
Assistant Secretary - Policy, Management and Budget

"When I became the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resource last year, I spent a fair amount of time talking with the Assistant Secretaries and the Bureau Directors to learn about each of their human resources needs. My Personnel Director, Carolyn Cohen, did the same thing, separately, and she and I came together to discuss our findings. We found that the Bureaus were looking to have a better and more focused human resources program. One that is current, customer-service oriented and, while being departmental in focus, one that recognizes the unique needs of each Bureau and its mission. *We heard you. One size does not fit all.*

We brought the Department of the Interior's Personnelists, EEO Officers, Program Managers and line-supervisors (the HR Community) together to prepare a plan for meeting the challenges of the 21st century. In this strategic plan, **Success Through Human Resources: From Strategy to Action**, we set out the vision, values, guiding principles, desired outcomes and actions that will allow us to successfully face those challenges. Together, with executive representatives from all Bureaus and Offices, we determined our collective vision, that is, to provide the best federal human resources program, emphasizing sound advice and policy, and good, timely customer service.

This service plan is not an end in itself -- *it is a beginning*. We will move beyond strategies by converting them to *action*. As you read **Success Through Human Resources: From Strategy to Action**, tactical development plans are being developed to make the goal, outcomes and actions of this plan a *reality*.

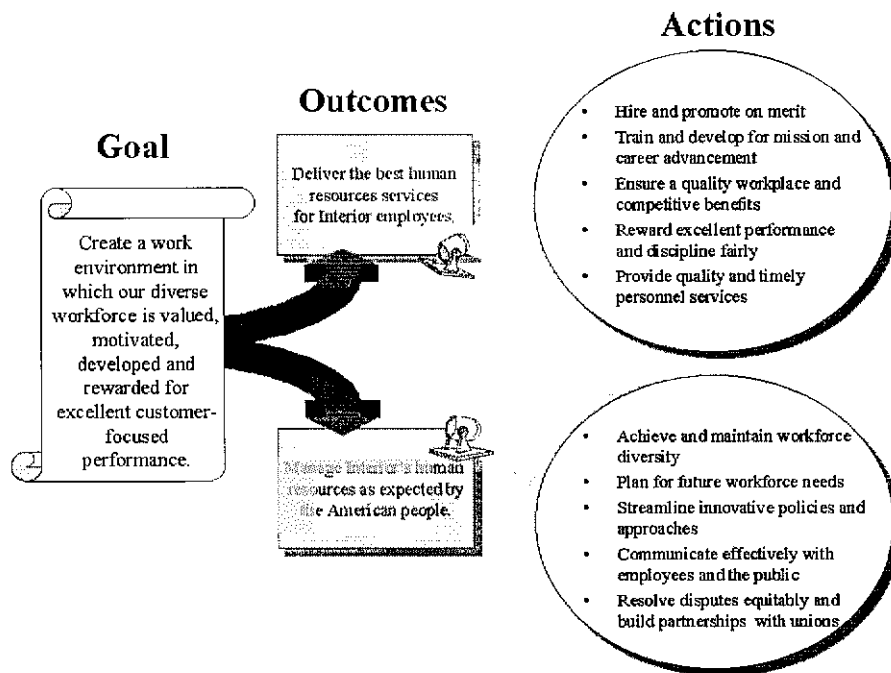
We hope you find our plan informative and inspiring, and that you see the strength that will come from creating a work environment in which our diverse workforce is valued, motivated, developed and rewarded for excellent customer-focused performance. We will work together to do the right thing, in the right way, to support our people as they work to accomplish Interior's mission."

- Mari R. Barr
Deputy Assistant Secretary - Human Resources

Overview

Success through Human Resources: From Strategy to Action shares Interior's *Vision, Values and Guiding Principles*, and outlines:

- **Creating the Future: Our Strategic Goal and Outcomes** -- Our goal and the outcomes we will need to achieve the goal
- **Strategic Actions** -- The actions we will take to achieve the goal and outcomes as shown in the diagram below.



This plan also addresses how we will develop tactical plans for accomplishing the strategic actions.

Introduction

Our employees are the Department of Interior's greatest resource. They work to accomplish a challenging national mission—*protect and provide access to our Nation's natural and cultural heritage and honor our trust responsibilities to tribes.*

The department's human resources management programs play a critical role in developing and maintaining the effective workforce needed to accomplish the department's mission. To ensure the department can meet the challenges of the future, human resources managers and professionals led in preparing this Strategic Plan for the department's human resources management: *Success Through Human Resources: From Strategy to Action.*

This strategic plan will chart the direction for human resources management within the department for the next few years. This plan will provide the "what" and "why" for our direction; we will develop corresponding tactical plans, the "how to" plans to accomplish these actions; tactical plans will be approved and prioritized within resource constraints. We recognize that change is inevitable and not all contingencies can be anticipated. A clear picture of our goals, however, allows us to make course corrections along the way.

We developed this plan using wide reaching input—from the human resources management, budget, and equal employment opportunity communities; executives; supervisors; and employees. The process we used was simple: understand current status; consider options and decide future direction; and determine action plans.

To decide our direction, we conducted an introspective analysis of the current state of human resources management in the department. Then we factored in the many social, economic, and demographic trends that will probably shape the future. The effort started with senior leadership's statement of their vision, values and guiding principles for the human resources management community.

Vision, Values, and Guiding Principles

The United States Department of the Interior is an exciting place to work—our dedicated, excellent workforce enjoys rewarding opportunities and highly competitive benefit programs.

The vision statement for the department's human resources programs (the foundation for this plan) evolved from the department's mission statement. This plan also embodies the values and guiding principles that drive the human resources management community.

Vision

In order to protect and provide access to our Nation's natural and cultural heritage and honor our trust responsibilities to tribes, we will create a work environment in which our diverse workforce is valued, motivated, developed and rewarded for excellent customer-focused performance.

Values And Guiding Principles

We are committed to building and maintaining an environment where merit principles, effective leadership, excellence, and empowerment are respected and valued.

Creating the Future: Our Strategic Goal and Outcomes

If we are to achieve *Success Through Our Human Resources*, we must move from *Strategy to Action*. We must improve our human resources management programs to prepare for the future. We must train and motivate our people to accomplish our mission. We have identified areas requiring attention which will involve comprehensive planning, updating policies, reengineering processes, and improving communications. Our strategic goal is to achieve our vision by *creating a work environment in which our diverse workforce is valued, motivated, developed and rewarded for excellent customer-focused performance*.

To attain this goal we must achieve outcomes that make a rewarding, successful workplace a reality:

- ▶ **Deliver the best human resources services for Interior employees.**

The services must respond to the overall needs of each of the bureaus; support all our people and each of our bureaus' and offices' missions effectively; and help the bureaus meet the department's mission.

- ▶ **Manage Interior's human resources as expected by the American people.**

Management must reflect our commitment to the basic precepts of the merit system principles and equal employment opportunity; effectively deal with employees having chronic performance or conduct problems; and be flexible and adaptable to ensure the department can hire and retain the qualified, motivated, diverse, and effective staff needed to succeed.

Strategic Actions

We need high quality personnel program operations at the bureau, office, and field levels to rise to the challenges that face us and fulfill our managers', customers', and employees' expectations for excellent customer service. Our strategic goal and outcomes will help ensure we meet these high standards.

This section lays out the specific actions and recommendations needed to achieve the strategic goal and outcomes. Taking these actions will require:

- Ensuring that everyone in the human resources management community has the knowledge, tools, and support they need
- Updating our policies to ensure they are workable, effective, and succinct

Deliver the Best Human Resources Services for Interior Employees

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire and promote on merit • Train and develop for mission and career advancement • Enhance a quality workplace and competitive benefits • Reward for excellent performance and discipline fairly • Provide quality and timely personnel services |
|--|

Hire and Promote on Merit

-
- **Market department's jobs, benefits and quality of work life**
 - **Develop intake programs at entry**
-

Only by hiring and promoting highly skilled and the most deserving employees will we be able to meet the short- and long-term organizational needs of the department. We must hire and promote the best and the brightest people consistent with merit principles and our goal of achieving a diverse workforce. We must project the skills needed and tailor our human resources management strategies. We need to review our recruitment strategies with a view toward flexibility, streamlining, and responsiveness with the end goal of hiring the best available individuals in a timely manner.

To attract and retain these individuals, we must capitalize on the

department's strengths. The department has some of the greatest job opportunities available—unique and challenging jobs in a variety of locations throughout the United States and abroad. We also have competitive compensation and benefits programs that value family and quality of life.

We must be proactive in attracting students to work in the department. Intake programs at the entry and mid-levels should be institutionalized to formalize our commitment to hire and train the best and the brightest people entering the workforce. We must establish out-reach programs to make students at all levels—even grade and high schools—aware of the challenging career opportunities within the department. We must do what we can to influence academic programs so that graduates can bring the skills we need to the workplace.

Train and Develop for Mission and Career Advancement

-
- **Promote continuous training and development**
 - **Be cost effective**
 - **Find new ways to enhance training (sabbaticals, rotational assignments, distance learning)**
 - **Use what works**
-

Simply hiring highly skilled individuals is not enough. We must provide opportunities, challenges, and experiences to help employees do their best in their current jobs and encourage them to aspire to higher levels. Providing opportunities for employees to gain the technical skills they need for future opportunities within the department is crucial. As organizations, technology, and ways of doing business change over an employee's career, training is needed throughout. Our employees need continuous training and development opportunities to maximize their individual growth and contributions to the department. This will increase their satisfaction with their positions and commitment to the department.

Training has traditionally been the one of the first programs cut during budget reductions. We can no longer afford to approach training and development as an additional cost, rather we must view it as an investment in our workforce.

To ensure a trained, skilled workforce, we must:

- Use the skills of the employees we currently have, including

- providing needed retraining as necessary to broaden their skills and their contribution to the department
- Ensure that new employees attain the necessary training to ensure their full competency
- Encourage and support continuous learning
- Maintain cost effectiveness and mission-related training as primary criteria for training source selection

To provide effective training, we must:

- Determine what works well and use these methods
- Ensure that we are taking advantage of what is already available, such as the Department Learning Centers, the Presidential Management Intern program, and Leadership and Management Development programs
- Provide training in the most cost effective way possible, including relying on more non-traditional approaches, such as sabbatical programs, rotational assignments, and distance-learning (via technology)

Our training programs must be designed to fulfill our mandate to increase sensitivity and awareness of the diversity of our workforce. We must impart to all employees the importance of working as a team as we strive to meet our common goal—accomplishing our mission. In particular, supervisors and managers must be made aware of how to supervise their diverse staffs and set the example for others.

Enhance a Quality Workplace and Competitive Benefits

-
- **Family friendly workplace: child-care, elder-care, wellness**
 - **Needs of older workers**
-

To retain the employees we have recruited and trained, we must build programs that support their needs and can compete with other federal agencies and private industry. This means developing and sustaining supportive and nurturing benefit packages and workplaces. We need to ensure a quality workplace by responding to our employees' needs. We can become more family friendly and

promote efficiency and flexibility by:

- Improving our child-care, elder-care and wellness programs
- Emphasizing workplace options such as telecommuting, job-sharing, flexible work scheduling and part-time employment

As the next century arrives, more and more of our workers will elect to stay in the workforce longer than ever before. We must address the needs of those workers. In addition to programs that improve everyone's quality of life, we will have to make addressing these worker's specific health and workplace needs a priority. We must also find ways to capitalize and capture the important experiences and knowledge these workers bring.

Reward Excellent Performance and Discipline Fairly

-
- **Performance management**
 - **Assuring productivity**
-

We must also ensure that our human resources management programs motivate our employees to peak performance. We must evaluate and enhance strategies that deal with motivating and recognizing our employees throughout their careers, which includes all issues associated with awards, performance, and quality of life.

The Government Performance and Results Act has challenged the Federal government to make wiser use of its resources, achieve organizational goals, and hold its employees and managers accountable for results. We must find better ways to link employee performance to those mission outcomes so that employees can be rewarded and held accountable.

Performance management strengthens accountability and the effective use of resources. Effective performance management includes:

- Communicating and clarifying goals; developing the capacity to perform
 - Tracking and assessing performance
 - Providing feedback and coaching
 - Dealing with poor performance and disciplinary problems
-

- Rewarding achievement

It is not acceptable to allow non-productive employees to remain on the rolls without contributing to accomplishing the mission. As our resources dwindle while customer service expectations grow, it is too expensive, both in dollars and employee morale, to keep non-producers employed. The good employees who are overworked will move on to better situations, leaving non-productive employees behind. As we compete to keep the best and brightest employees, supervisors must strive to achieve optimal working conditions. To do this, we must embrace the principle of zero tolerance for continual nonproductivity.

Provide Quality and Timely Personnel Services

-
- **Reengineer personnel processes**
 - **Make maximum use of technology and automation**
 - **Test service delivery options (contracting-out, partnerships)**
 - **Embrace new roles for personnel staff**
-

We must continue to improve the efficiency and quality of personnel services and be careful not to reduce services at the employees' expense. We are seeking new ways to provide services. We must accelerate our efforts to reengineer our personnel business processes and use automation and technology to support these new processes. As we continue to enhance our efficiency, the emphasis on investigating and testing service delivery options will increase. These options include contracting certain functions, implementing or improving partnership efforts, cross-servicing between and among bureaus, and franchising. We can do some of this by sharing resources among bureaus and improving communication about available flexible alternatives.

One key to maximizing our staff's efficiency is improving the use of current and future technology. We must become innovators and developers in areas where we can gain the most productivity, particularly in using effective, state-of-the-art service delivery systems that will enhance our ability to provide a variety of low-cost services.

Assuring that our technology and systems are state-of-the-art is an expensive proposition. We must ensure the equipment and support needed for such systems is adequately planned for in the

department's budget process. There must be a careful analysis of which systems provide the most benefit for all bureaus, and then consistent implementation to ensure that all receive the maximum benefit possible. In addition to being cost-effective, our systems must provide flexibility so that each bureau can delegate functions to managers as necessary, yet still maintain appropriate standards and oversight.

Human resources management programs and systems and the way these programs are administered must evolve to meet changes in the way government conducts business and customer expectations.

Human resource professionals' roles are changing, too. To meet the challenges of streamlining, staff reductions, and new technologies, we must grow from a "service delivery" role (payroll, benefits, processing actions) to a much larger role as a partner on the management team. Management now expects human resource staff to help manage employees in all phases of employment and throughout their careers. Management relies on human resource professionals as experts in law, rules, and regulations to understand flexibilities available in our systems and find and use these flexibilities for more effective personnel management.

To ensure smooth and efficient operations in our partnerships, human resources professionals must:

- Understand the organizational culture
- Understand team behavior
- Ensure employees focus on the mission
- Assist in planning efforts to enhance each organizations' ability to compete

They must be leaders in risk taking but balance this with honoring merit principles and ensuring ethical behavior and credibility in the process to create and/or maintain trust. They must also be able to assist in resolving conflict, effectively communicate, and demonstrate their respect for and value of all individuals. Finally, human resources professionals must be change agents for our organizations, assisting in building consensus, influencing others by

sharing information, managing change effectively and working through and with people to get the job done.

Manage Interior's Human Resources as Expected by the American People

- Achieve and maintain workforce diversity
- Streamline innovative policies and approaches
- Plan for future workforce needs
- Communicate effectively with employees and the public
- Resolve disputes equitably and build partnerships with unions

Achieve and Maintain Workforce Diversity

- **Implement strategic plan for improving diversity**

America's diversity has given this country its unique strength, resilience, and richness. One of the future trends that will influence the way we will conduct business is a labor force with a higher proportion of minorities, women, and older workers.

Developing a productive workplace environment for all employees means ensuring that the diversity of our nation is represented in our workforce. We will continue to emphasize zero tolerance of discrimination and we must ensure our managers and supervisors are prepared to take appropriate action if and when it does occur.

To do this we will implement the provisions of the Department of the Interior's Strategic Plan for Improving Diversity.

Streamline Innovative Personnel Policies and Approaches

Excellent personnel administration and management can not exist without good guidance. That guidance starts with law and continues with departmental policy and bureau instructions. The guidance must be timely, accurate, and flexible enough to meet the many and varied needs of the department and be responsive to mission changes.

Change laws to:

- **Enhance recruiting strategies**
 - **Increase policy flexibilities for awards and recognition**
 - **Link mission outcome and employee performance**
 - **Increase training opportunities**
 - **Improve management's ability to deal with unproductive employees**
 - **Increase retirement options**
-

We must find new ways of using the legal authorities and flexibilities that already exist at the department level. This means updating the departmental policy and guidance to make them streamlined, effective, and easy to understand and use.

Further, we must work with the Office of Personnel Management and other federal agencies to establish new legal frameworks in which to operate. Our first priority will be to address areas of immediate importance, such as qualifications standards that may be too limiting, and burdensome reporting requirements. Old, outdated laws and personnel requirements must be changed to provide the flexibility needed in the 21st century. At a minimum, we will push for new legislation and flexibilities in recruiting, classification and compensation, performance, awards, and retirements.

Recruiting—New recruiting and hiring authorities would help fill jobs faster.

Classification and compensation—Possibly the single greatest source of dissatisfaction is the current classification system. It is viewed as inflexible; labor intensive; and having too many grades, occupations, standards, and restrictive policies. The classification and compensation system has limited our ability to recognize variances in employee performance and our ability to compensate accordingly. We need to push for the simplest, most effective means of evaluating positions and paying employees.

Training—Effective training policy is needed to ensure our people get the training that they need, when they need it. The way training is provided to our employees need not, and likely cannot, follow traditional paths.

Performance—While performance management laws and regulations provide for dealing with unproductive employees, the realities are that procedures are cumbersome, time-consuming and ineffective. The goal should always be to assist the employee to become a productive and viable contributor to the organization. However, departmental policy and guidance must be designed to

assist managers and supervisors to handle situations when this does not happen.

Awards—Traditionally, reward for a job well done meant some kind of monetary recognition. Recently, there have been changes toward non-monetary recognition including time off, T-shirts, team recognition, and gift-certificates. We should explore and seek further legislative and policy changes that allow additional flexibilities to managers to provide meaningful recognition to their employees.

Retirements—We must be able to quickly react to new skill and workforce requirements. This means shaping the workforce to meet the needs of an ever changing environment. We must also explore and obtain authorization for tools (e.g., targeted buyout authority, phased retirement, trial retirement, emeritus programs) that help shape the workforce. As employee skills and mission needs change, having the tools to retain employees with needed skills and transfer or retrain employees with obsolete skills is imperative.

Retirement is a rite of passage for many employees. Deciding to leave (or to return) can be extremely difficult and stressful. Current regulations require salary reduction for individuals who retire and come back to work for the government. Changing appropriate laws and regulations so employees are not financially penalized for nontraditional approaches to retirement, such as returning as a re-employed annuitant and allowing phased retirement are ways to facilitate the transfer of critical expertise to new individuals and allow senior employees to make an easier transition into retirement. This approach would permit individuals who are close to retirement to complete a project or activity or to work part-time while providing training to their replacement. Other options that may assist with easing the transition to retirement and the transfer of skills include an “emeritus program” or trial retirement.

Plan for Future Workforce Needs

-
- **Comprehensive workforce analysis**
 - **Succession planning**
-

To meet critical future needs, we must perform a comprehensive workforce analysis and succession planning. To ensure critical skills are maintained in the department long before individuals leave the rolls, we must:

- Evaluate the skills of our current workforce
- Understand what skills we need in the future
- Plan to ensure that we have enough employees who have these skills

With this analysis and planning, we can effectively tailor our recruitment strategies to obtain the talent we require.

A significant portion of the department's workforce is eligible to retire in the next three to five years. This potential major demographic shift requires us to:

- Evaluate how to handle the loss of expertise such as replace staff, contract out, stop performing the function
- Evaluate how to, and if we should, replace individuals as they leave
- Determine what additional skills are required in our workforce and seek those skills
- Develop training programs to help cultivate needed skills
- Explore alternative working arrangements of employees wishing to test retirement, yet still contribute to the mission
- Help our dedicated, hard-working employees make the transition into retirement

Communicate Effectively with Employees and the Public

We must also improve communications and information. This applies not only in the human resources and equal employment opportunity communities, but in all areas (e.g., among and between managers and employees and the department and bureaus). We

must build more effective support networks. While each bureau has its own identity and program responsibilities, we must do a better job of recognizing and capitalizing on areas where improvements can be made across the board.

-
- **Improve communication**
 - **Share ideas and best practices**
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Instead of reinventing the wheel in each location, sharing and using ideas that have worked in other places will help all of us more effectively use our time and resources. Sharing information may also alleviate some inconsistencies and duplications. Many flexibilities currently in regulations are not being fully used because supervisors, managers or human resources professionals do not know they exist. Better communication and use of automated systems or other methods will help export programs and ideas that are already working well in other locations

Better communication can help develop an understanding of the varying human resource priorities and issues among offices/groups. We will reach better conclusions and decisions when we have input from individuals who play key roles in implementing a particular policy or function.

Resolve Workplace Disputes Equitably and Build Partnerships with Unions

-
- **Use ADR**
 - **Respect and involve employees and unions**
 - **Develop and strengthen partnerships**
-

We constantly strive for a harmonious work environment, free from workplace disputes and disagreements which prevent us from being as productive as we can be. From time to time, however, disputes arise which cannot be readily resolved. Traditional dispute resolution is time consuming and often imposes a "solution" handed down by a third party, where neither party walks away satisfied, and the conflict continues or increases—clearly a lose-lose situation for all.

Fortunately, an effective, informal opportunity to resolve these differences does exist: "Alternative Dispute Resolution." Alternative Dispute Resolution is the collective name for a number of voluntary joint problem-solving processes used in lieu of formal, adversarial methods for resolving conflict. ADR is often less costly and time consuming and can provide long term solutions to

employee-employer conflicts through stakeholders' participation and buy-in. We will expand and enhance the use of ADR processes to resolve disputes in a productive manner, and we will strongly encourage and promote its use in all aspects of the workplace. We will also look for even more effective and efficient methods for dealing with workplace disputes and disagreements both quickly and fairly.

Involving employees and their union representatives is essential to improving the department's overall effectiveness and efficiency in serving the needs of our customers. A productive workforce requires managers and employees to work together in an atmosphere of cooperation. Managers must respect and empower their employees through effective communication, appropriate delegation of authority, developing a sense of enthusiasm and pride, and ensuring appropriate recognition. Respect for employees includes their legally recognized labor representatives and the growing number of labor-management partnership councils throughout the department.

Partnerships are guided by basic principles of commitment, trust, mutual respect, fairness, open communication and understanding. While partnerships may vary from organization to organization, one essential characteristic exists in all—a desire to change the traditional labor-management relationship using collaborative or interest-based problem solving to resolve workplace issues. If the spirit and intent of this concept is fully embraced and innovatively used throughout the department, partnership can be a highly effective tool for creating positive change and improving the department's overall effectiveness and efficiency.

Taking Action

We must strive to make continuous improvement in programs throughout the department by establishing consistent standards, streamlining processes, allowing flexibilities, eliminating burdensome requirements, and simplifying procedures.

To accomplish the goal and outcomes of *Success Through Human Resources: From Strategy to Action*, we will develop tactical plans for each action discussed in this report. Tactical planning allows us to turn the strategic goal and initiatives into specific action plans. Tactical plans provide the detailed “how,” for the strategic plan's “what” and “why.” Tactical plans will only be approved when they are appropriate, reasonable, and achievable within resource constraints. The Steering Committee will prioritize and approve plans that have department-wide implications and ensure that resource requirements are properly addressed.

As a minimum, each tactical plan will include:

- A statement identifying the outcome and action the plan addresses.
- A statement identifying the purpose of the plan (what end-state is desired).
- A gap analysis (a narrative that describes the current state, the desired end state, and the difference between the two).
- A specific action plan (detailed step-by-step information on exactly what actions will be performed to accomplish the goal).
- A timeline that details the start date and completion date for each step of the action plan.
- A list of responsible individuals or offices that will be held accountable for accomplishing each step of the action plan.
- A list of the method and measures that will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the tactical plan. The evaluation will ensure that appropriate actions are taken in accordance with the plan and that progress is being made to achieve the goals.

These tactical plans will become addendums to this strategic plan and will be developed, modified, and implemented as resources allow.

Conclusion

We must act now to ensure the department can meet the many challenges of the next century. The department requires a dedicated, knowledgeable, and motivated workforce to carry out the mission the American public has entrusted to us. Without an effective, well planned human resource program, the workers we need will not be there.

Implementing this strategic plan will provide the workforce we need by:

- Determining the skills, capabilities, and leadership the Department needs for future tasks
- Ensuring we have those skills by recruiting, training, and retaining highly skilled and motivated people
- Providing effective, streamlined policy so that managers and employees have the flexibility needed to shape a productive workforce

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to the Executive Steering Committee members who provided visionary leadership for this strategic planning effort.

Mari Barr (Chairperson)

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources
U.S. Department of the Interior

Robert Brown

Associate Director for Administration and Budget
Minerals Management Service

Joseph Doddridge

Assistant to the Asst Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks
U.S. Department of the Interior

Robert Ewing

Assistant Director of Finance and Administration
Surface Mining, Reclamation and Enforcement

Robert Lamb

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Budget and Finance
U.S. Department of the Interior

Robert More

Associate Solicitor for Administration
Office of the Solicitor

Denise Sheehan

Assistant Director of Planning and Budget
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Michael Anderson

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs
Bureau of Indian Affairs

Carolyn Cohen

Director of Personnel Policy
U.S. Department of the Interior

Sharon Eller

Assistant Inspector General for Management and Policy
Office of the Inspector General

Tom Fry

Deputy Director
Bureau of Land Management

Carmen Maymi

Manager of Washington Administration and Performance
Review Initiative - Bureau of Reclamation

Barbara Ryan

Associate Director of Operations
U.S. Geological Survey

Lynn Smith

Associate Director of Administration
National Parks Service

Dave Anderson

Technical Advisor
Office of Personnel Policy

We commend contributions made by the 56 Bureau and Office managers, supervisors, personnelists, equal employment opportunity specialists, information resource specialists and budget analysts who served on the Strategic Planning Committee.

Bureau of Indian Affairs

Terry Baker
Carla Chappabitty
Joann Deere
James Ross
Stephanie Pretty Weasel
Merle Zunigha

Bureau of Land Management

Fran Cherry
Frank Frymire
Sherian Long
Phyllis McKoy
Tom O'Donnell

Fish and Wildlife Service

Linda Browning
Gary Ceccucci
Karen Milkin
Kathy Tynan

Office of the Inspector General

Sharon Eller

Minerals Management Service

Suzan Bacigalupi
Sue Hester
Bernice Jones
Beth Orman
Joann Ransford
Sandra Streets
Jan Therkildsen

National Park Service

Debbie Burton-Orton
Mike Clayton
Pauline Jue
Dave Mihalic

Ernest Ortega
Armando Quintero
Evelyn Sheehan
Lynn Smith
Alex Young

Office of Surface Mining

Beverly Brock
Lionel Chase
Shirely Cossey
Sarah Donnelly
Bob Ewing
Rick Seibel

U.S. Geological Survey

Bill Fordyce
Kimball Goddard
Gayle Sisler

Bureau of Reclamation

Pete Alderete
Ann Gold
Janice Johnson
Dick Jorgenson
Kathy Keefe
John Lease
Kathlyn Mickelsen
Roger Pollock
Diane Zontek

Office of the Secretary

Dave Anderson
Ronald Bowman
Carolyn Cohen
John Combs
Casey Schaffer
Carl Wallace

Hearfelt thanks to the people who provided the extra support needed to complete this strategic plan.

Ann Gold

Kathy Keefe

Deena Larsen (Writer-Editor Support)

Bureau of Reclamation Upper Colorado Region Human Resources Group Staff